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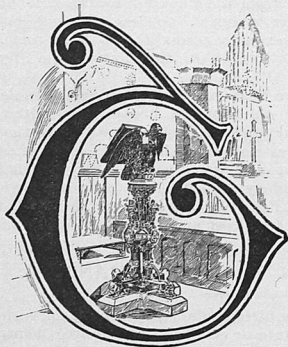
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THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

CHURCH DECORATION.



A SERIES OF ARTICLES.

NUMBER FOUR.

BY
MARY GAY HUMPHREY.

HE most important event of the Church, next to the origin of Christianity, was the conversion of Constantine. His conversion even had its appropriate *mise en scene*. It

was he who gave to the Church those material accessories that have ever since attracted the eye and taken captive the imagination. He was the father of ecclesiastical decoration.

In the Lateran Church at Rome there is yet sacredly preserved a wooden table on which St. Peter offered mass. The wooden table, *mensa domini*, was certainly the first altar, and the early Christians availed themselves of whatever conveniences they might find for their celebration of the Eucharist. In the Catacombs at Rome is found the first humble conception of the altar as it exists to-day, and it presents a significant instance of the rise and crystallization of formulas and beliefs. This is the tomb of some beloved martyr covered with a slab, and carried above the earth a triumphal arch. So little conscious that any doctrine was foreshadowed in these evidences of present necessity and tender affection, when better times came and Christian churches arose, the altar remained a table standing detached, in the apse behind, and around which the bishops and the clergy sat. There was no decoration, no altar cloths, no crucifix. On the conversion of Constantine the magic of a transformation scene takes place. There arise spacious churches, gorgeous trappings, costly altars, and lofty badalchins. From henceforth the Church has been the most picturesque and imposing object on which every succeeding generation has gazed. From this point of view the influence it has exerted over the minds of men, in the arts and the manifold industries of the world exceeds that of other human institutions. The growth and development of ceremonies is usually gradual. But in the Church they burst forth with the splendor and luxuriance of some tropical flower. Dr. Roche in his "Hierugia," writes:

"From the moment that Constantine declared himself a Christian the ceremonies of religion were performed with splendor, and regal magnificence shone through all the sacred ritual."

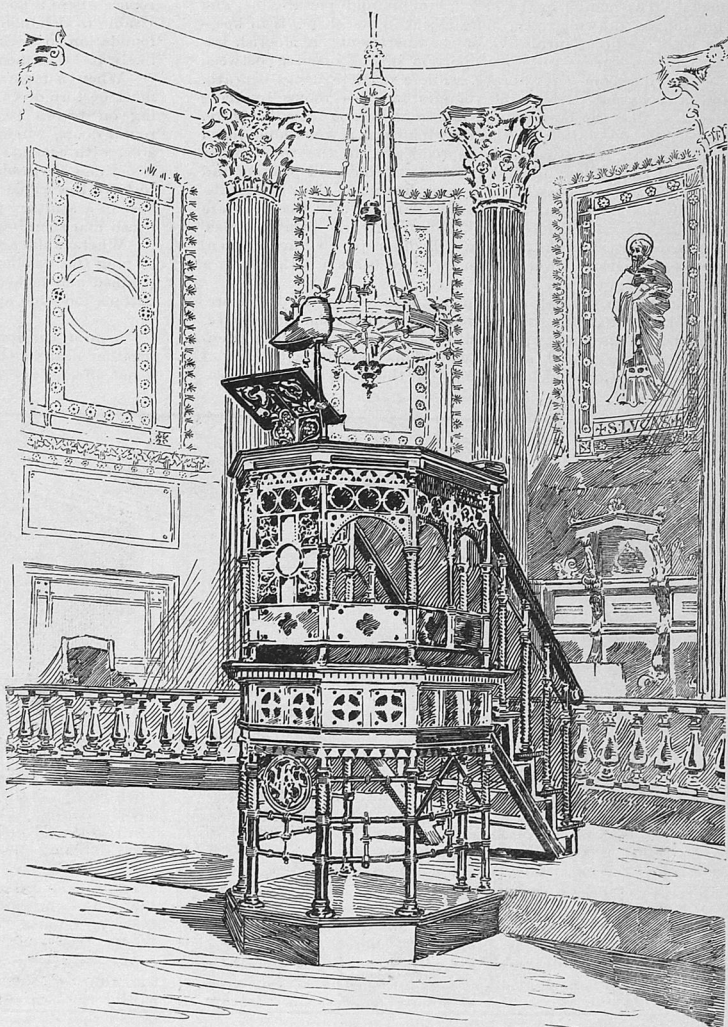
The dress of the priests had been that of the ordinary Roman citizen, now it became that of the most luxurious class. The simple striped garment, the *latus-clavus*, was exchanged for the richest vestures. The garment given by Constantine to Macareus, the bishop of Jerusalem, in which to administer the rites of baptism, was cloth of gold. The ecclesiastical wardrobe rapidly expanded. To it Pope and Emperor gave their serious thoughts. Pope Sylvester made over the royal vest into the dalmatic; the priest's handkerchief was so inwrought with gold that it became a sacred work of art, and was carried for show. The simple strip, with its scarlet stripe, that the Romans wore, is now the orphrey. The penula or cloak was transformed into the chasuble. These were the medium of so much significance that embroidery became a

science, and the classification of sacred garments required a glossary, and out of their manufacture arose a new profession.

That which is true of the sacred robes is even more conspicuous in the Church appointments. The rude altar erected over the martyr's grave now becomes a costly receptacle for relics. St. Sophia becomes the scene of gorgeous pageants; the altar is of gold, adorned with precious stones. It is easy to see how this magnificence of material determined its removal in days yet turbulent to the back of the chancel, and caused it to be made immovable; and how there rose about it the reredos, the badalchin and the rood screen. There each in turn became invested with ecclesiastical dignity and gave opportunity for further lavish enrichment of the sacred edifice.

Strangely the cross is the last of the prominent ecclesiastical devices to obtain prominence, at the same time no emblem was more universal. The early Christians have kept it, more or less rudely carved, on all their remains, but until the reign of Constantine it was without ornament. United with his blazon it became the standard of the army, but its place in the Church was not fixed until long after. The Crown was suspended above the altar, and the Lamb was the sacred emblem, but the Cross had no place on the altar until the tenth century. The Processional Cross, glittering with gold and gems, was the proud ensign of the Church triumphant and militant.

Crosses on standards, having almost architectural importance, so imposing were they, were erected in the Churches. But the Crucifix, as distinguished from the Cross, had no place amid the ecclesiastical grandeur that distinguished the fourth century. That arose out of subsequent trials and afflictions, and the history of its development, as told by old prints, is curious and interesting. While the Church has added to her ritual, and new



POLISHED BRASS PULPIT (LIPPINCOTT MEMORIAL), ST. LUKE'S CHURCH, PHILADELPHIA.
DESIGNED AND EXECUTED BY J. & R. LAMB, NEW YORK.

THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

doctrines have acquired new accessories, no succeeding period has equalled this in magnificence. Of the rise of new arts and of different phases of art, the Church has yet the most complete record. Work in metals, wood, glass, stone, the revival of painting and sculpture, owe to the Church its chief encouragement, and with no other title to our gratitude, patron of the arts would insure it. But the essentials of the Church were fixed at this early resplendent period, and the pageant of the Church in which they played so conspicuous a part have never been excelled.

The Reformation marks the limit of reaction, and from it the Church has never recovered. It is significant to-day that it is not in the Catholic Churches that are found the best instances of the later revival in ecclesiastical art, but in the Episcopal and other Churches. In this country, while we are accustomed to consider Puritanism a local rather than a national influence, it has shaped not only all our religious movement but its outward form. Nothing could be more depressing than the early Church architecture and Church interiors in the United States. Even in those States, such as Virginia and Maryland, where the Episcopal and Catholic Churches prevailed, proved no exception. The Episcopal Churches, particularly, had a freezing, Puritanic aspect, which was probably attributed to patriotic motives, and as a sort of protest against England.

Occasionally in the Colonial Churches and among the sternest sects there were to be found some interesting details, showing an artistic sense not altogether latent. There is still retained in the rooms of the New York Historical Society the pulpit of the old Seventh Day Baptist Church, the beautiful hand carved rails of which are both admired and copied by modern architects. This rail, by the way, and its steps have been utilized for artistic purposes by Mr. B. F. Porter in his portrait of Mrs. Henry Clews, recently exhibited at the National Academy of Design.

The barrenness of the Colonial Churches had at least the merit of sincerity, and from this distance is much less offensive than the pretension and commonplaceness of later periods. If a meeting house was gloomy, so was its doctrine. With alleviation of the creed came aggravation to the senses. The sham Gothic revival ravaged interiors as well as exteriors, even its shamness was trifled with. A comparatively modern instance in the West, is in an alleged Gothic Church, but the rich man of the place and principal donor objected to the side walls rising above the roof line, on the score that it wasn't sound building, and the roof would leak. Accordingly the high pitched tiles were made to project like a barn roof. Equally whimsical and unreasonable individual caprices have controlled interiors in every part of the country.

In is only within the last decade that church interiors have been made a matter of artistic consideration, but the instances are still comparatively few. At the same time no sort of buildings so plainly indicate the line to be pursued. As in architecture the ornament should proceed out of the construction, so do the religious doctrines and rites of a church suggest from what points its outward depression should develop.

Of this no church equals the Catholic in its splendid equipment of dogmas and rites. The altar, the superfrontale, the candles, the crucifixes, the altar trappings, the stations, the pulpit, may well be aspiring themes to both artist and architect. The Episcopal Church offers only less opportunity for enforcing the significance of the altar, reredos, lectern and pulpit, and of making the chancel a beautiful and harmonious exposition of the hopes and faith of the Church. In other churches the preaching takes precedence of the services. The pulpit and the communion table are the cardinal points, and present the themes with which the fitting of the Church should be in harmony.

This, however, is by no means the method practiced. Most churches have a heterogeneous aspect, which plainly results from no common thought. The very praiseworthy and growing custom of making memorials, greatly contributes to this lack of unity. It is a delicate matter to dictate the conditions of a gift,

but those who give memorials would always do a graceful thing in consulting the architect or whoever may be in charge of the interior, without concerted action, very embarrassing results even arise. In a handsome church, just completed, a memorial window has been placed in the face of the congregation, made of glass so light in color that the serious consideration has arisen as to how it shall be made less annoying to those who confront it. In another church, and a more pertinent example of the necessity for co operative architecture, is very distinctly Romanesque, and is especially emphasized in the chancel, to which a costly reredos of perpendicular Gothic has been given, and while the surrounding color is measurably glowing the reredos is of the bluest and most ghostly marble.

One of the most patent evidences of the renewed interest in this matter is in the use of color to replace the cold formality that under the Gothic influences so long prevailed. In St. Thomas' Church, in this city, the Cross with the sculptured adoring angels, by Mr. Augustus St. Gaudens, and the large mural paintings by Mr. La Farge, show the expansion of the reredos under modern influences. In the Church of the Transfiguration two more recent works by Mr. La Farge combine in an example of the same sort.

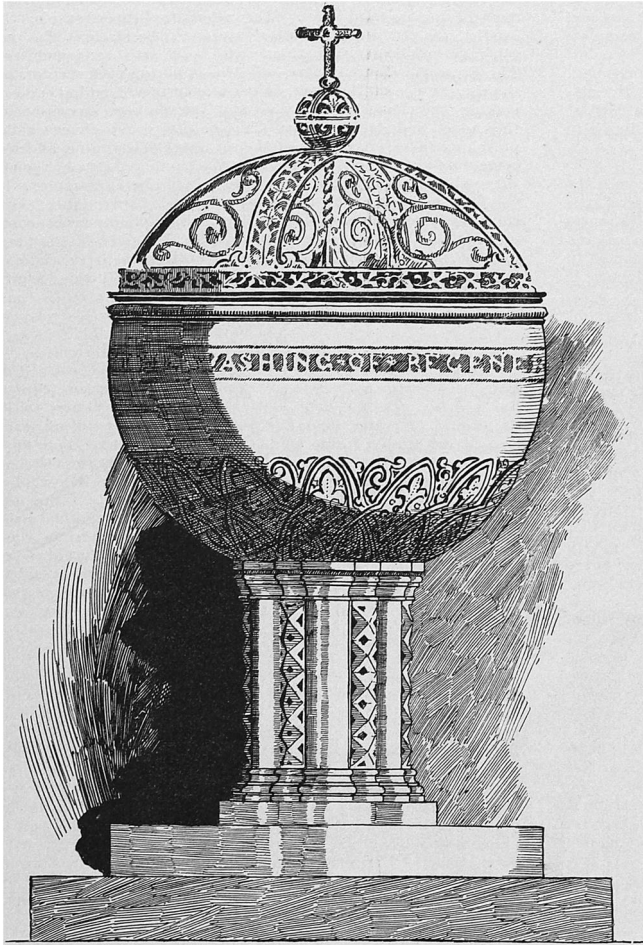
In the reredos of Zion Church, Palmyra,

N. Y., is a memorial of the Heminway family; the altar is surmounted by the Cross in a central niche, flanked by two smaller niches, making the central part of the reredos. This is, however, continued in two large panels at an angle, supported on small columns. In each of these are groups of three angels singing the *Te Deum* and playing on different instruments. These panels on each side meet the windows of stained glass, and thus almost the entire chancel is banded with decoration springing from the reredos.

Mr. Charles R. Lamb, who designed this, is also the designer of the reredos in St. Paul's Church, Evansville, Indiana. Here the altar and reredos are of oak. The reredos is in three panels, the two outer being in color and containing two heroic female figures, called Fortitude and Courage. These are kept light in reds and yellows, making harmony with the oak. The elaborating of color schemes finds places in many churches. In



POLISHED BRASS EAGLE LECTERN (ANDREWS MEMORIAL), ST. ANN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH, BROOKLYN.
DESIGNED AND EXECUTED BY J. & R. LAMB, NEW YORK.



POLISHED MARBLE FONT, WITH METAL COVER, GRACE CHURCH, KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI.
DESIGNED AND EXECUTED BY J. & R. LAMB, NEW YORK.

old St. Luke's, Philadelphia, the pulpit, which is the Lippincott Memorial, is a scheme in light yellow, worked out in brass and oak. A drawing of this pulpit is shown on page 18.

One of the most unique pulpits and one which best shows how far modern ideas have been carried, is in the Episcopal Cathedral of St. Paul's, at Syracuse, N. Y. The design is from the same hands as the work just referred to. The frame is of bronze and brass, and includes panels containing the symbols of the Evangelists. These symbols are executed in glass mosaics. The wings are of gold, accented with a fine red line. The nimbus is of red gold, and the design is relieved against a ground of light blue, and surrounded by a fine white and black border. The impression, however, is of yellow, harmonizing as does the upper part of the pulpit, which is of mahogany, kept low in tone, with the bronze and brass of the frame. The pulpit rests on small columns of greenish gray Champlain marble, giving a cool lower band of color that rises into warmer tints.

Lecterns are for the most part of brass, and the form preferred is that of the eagle on a standard supporting with outstretched wings the book rest. One of the most magnificent eagle lecterns in this country is that made for Trinity Church, Boston. "I am a man whose word on most subjects is usually taken," said at one time the Rev. Phillips Brooks, "but when I deny that this superb bird is English work, I realize that I am not believed." The lectern was in fact made by Messrs. J. & R. Lamb, of this city, as was that of Trinity Church in this city. In St. Ann's Church, Brooklyn, is a fine naturalistic eagle, which in dignity and as carrying out the underlying symbolism is to be preferred to the more usual conventional forms. (See illustration on page 19). One of the most elaborate lecterns is that for the Packer Memorial Church at Mauch Chunk. The eagle rests on a standard, with a central boss supporting four angels holding scrolls. Between these are medallions with symbols. The central panel contains St. Mark in repoussé bronze. Four crouching lions receive the Cross, which is the base of the

standard. The font erected by Constantine in St. Sophia was of porphyry, five feet high. In the centre was a column of gold supporting a lamp of gold. The water poured into the font through a lamb of solid gold. On one side stood a statue of Jesus and on the other side a statue of John, both of solid gold. Such are the broadest details of this marvellous work. The importance of the font is recognized in all churches, it being only the later substitute for the ancient baptistery. In every age it has been the occasion on which to lavish the richest and costliest work of art. One need only allude to the Baptistry at Florence, immortalized by Ghiberti's doors, and that of Pisa, with its famous pulpit. Work on early English fonts, with its copious illustrations, is full of interest, and one can only wonder that the more beautiful examples of Norman-Gothic work are not more frequently copied.

Recently an elaborate font, with a figure of the young John the Baptist, has been put into bronze for the Church of the Incarnation. The greater number of fonts in this country are of wood. In the Forty-second Street Presbyterian Church of this city there is a vase shaped walnut font, elaborately carved in continuous ornament with the passion flower as a motive, by Messrs. J. & R. Lamb. A recent design for Kansas City, by the same firm (see illustration, page 20,) is of Champlain marble, early English in style, with interlacing trefoil arches carved in relief. Another for Augusta, Georgia, is of white statuary marble and expresses in its form and ornamentation symbolism relating to the Trinity and double Trinity.

THE HARMONY OF COLORS FOR DECORATION.

WHEN rooms are painted or papered in tint of color, the combination necessary to carry out a pleasing effect is sufficiently simple and easy; but even in these great care should be taken to have those tints of a soft, agreeable tone. There are greens and greens, buffs and buffs, grays and grays; in the one case as ugly, raw, discordant, offensive and displeasing, as in the other they may be soft, harmonious, agreeable and refreshing to the sight. What can be more uncomformable than a crude emerald green? Soften it, however, with a little sienna or other moderating color, and make it suitable in depth of tone to the size of the room, and your skill and taste will make it as agreeable as it would be otherwise repulsive.

The woodwork of rooms and skirtings of staircases, etc., may be a good brown, maroon, or black, well relieved with light-colored lines; face up the work to a good surface and varnish.

In deciding the colors for rooms, their aspect should be well considered, giving cool and refreshing shades for the south, and warm, comfortable colors for the north. The use of a room should, of course, influence its color. Pictures require particular consideration: the color of the walls must be subservient to them. Sage green is a good tone if the pictures and the room be of moderate size. If the pictures be boldly painted, and the gallery be large and lighted from above, red is an excellent color.

The cornices of rooms require some skill in the treatment, and may be made to add much to the effect of a room by a proper application of color.

Large rooms of public buildings or churches demand far more skill than rooms of the ordinary kind—that is, if any character is to be given by the decoration. It is requisite to sustain more strictly the architectural effect and to convey an appropriate character, according to the purpose of the hall or church. This observation applies equally in carrying out the decoration of an apartment or interior devoted to any specific purpose.

